

## **CHINATOWN/LEATHER DISTRICT CENTRAL ARTERY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

### **DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES FOR PARCEL 24**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of these Development Guidelines is to set forth the design and use characteristics of proposals for Parcel 24 that will be supported by the community and the City. They are particularly intended to guide proponents with respect to the application of City of Boston housing policy and regulation, including the Chinatown Master Plan and zoning.

#### **Site Description**

- Central Artery/Tunnel Parcel 24 is an approximately 58,000 square-foot (sf) parcel that will be created by the removal of an existing Central Artery highway structure. (See attached map.) It is bounded by Kneeland Street on the north, Albany Street on the east, and Hudson Street on the west.

#### **Urban Context**

- Parcel 24 is situated at the intersection of three sections of Boston's downtown. Chinatown is adjacent to the site on the north and west. It is one of the city's most densely populated neighborhoods, with buildings ranging from four-story row houses to 225-foot towers. Tufts-New England Medical Center, with its older 50- to 150-foot buildings and newer research and clinical buildings of 150 to 250 feet, lies to the west. The Leather District is northeast of Parcel 24 and contains a mix of commercial, retail, residential, and restaurant uses in buildings of 75 to 100 feet. East of Albany Street is the South Bay area, which is devoted primarily to transportation uses – the highways, ramps, tunnels, and bridges connecting the Central Artery, Southeast Expressway, Massachusetts Turnpike, Ted Williams Tunnel, and South Station Transportation Center. South Bay is currently undergoing a separate community planning process that will establish the balance of uses and design guidelines for the development of the area. The downtown core, including the office building towers of the Financial District and central shopping district (Downtown Crossing) is two to four blocks to the north and northwest. Fort Point Channel is just east of South Station and has been undergoing planning, including the Harborwalk. The development on Parcel 24 will therefore connect the existing fabric of Chinatown with South Bay, as well as the Leather District, South Station, the Financial District, and the Fort Point Channel area.
- Kneeland Street is a significant city east-west street with high traffic and pedestrian volumes. Its improvement is an element of the Crossroads Initiative. Albany Street is a part of the access system for the Central Artery Project and will carry substantial traffic volumes, while Hudson Street is a one-way local street serving the immediate residential area. Improvements to the character of Albany and Kneeland Streets are being proposed through the South Bay Planning Study. Additionally, parking and curbside access are a continual issue in Chinatown. Many of the existing buildings were built without off-street parking, and as the area develops, parking is an increasingly valuable commodity. New developments in Chinatown are expected to satisfy their parking demands as part of their project.

## Background

- Through the early 1900's the Parcel 24 site was the location of Hudson Street businesses and residences, a thriving element of an immigrant community, which was predominantly Chinese, but included Lebanese, Syrian, and other ethnic groups. In the 1950's and 1960's, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority carried out highway projects that substantially reduced the land area of Chinatown. As part of these projects, approximately 200-300 housing units on the Parcel 24 site were demolished and its residents and businesses displaced. Combined with the construction of the MassPike Extension, the land area of Chinatown was significantly reduced. While the remainder of the century brought the establishment of new housing and businesses throughout the community, Parcel 24 has remained part of the highway. The Central Artery Project will relocate the highway elements to the east and make the site part of Chinatown once again.
- *1990 Chinatown Community Plan & Boston Zoning Code Article 43:* Parcel 24 is located within the Chinatown Gateway Sub-district of the Boston Zoning Code. As set forth in the Chinatown Master Plan and zoning, development within the sub-district should create a substantial amount of housing and should form a "Land Bridge" extending Chinatown eastward and connecting the neighborhood with the South Station transportation and economic center. The allowable maximum height for developments within the sub-district that are reviewed under Article 80 of the Boston Zoning Code is 100 feet, and the maximum Floor-to-Area-Ratio is seven (7.0).
- *The Boston 2000 Plan:* The City's adopted Plan for the Central Artery corridor calls for Parcel 24 to be housing, as well as complementary uses and a playground and other recreational uses.
- Article 43 of the Boston Zoning Code requires that a comprehensive plan be created for the Chinatown Gateway Sub-district. It establishes that Planned Development Areas (PDAs) would be allowed within the Chinatown Gateway Sub-district only after the comprehensive plan has been completed. The BRA has formed a community task force and is carrying out an eighteen-month public process to develop the required plan. Because the community, the City and State agreed that the primary use for Parcel 24 would be housing, and because they agreed on the desirability of moving ahead with its development, the community recommended that the development of Parcel 24 be expedited by excluding it from the South Bay Study planning process (thus making it PDA ineligible). This was done and the parties are proceeding with a Request for Proposals for the site. These design and development guidelines have been prepared through that process and are to be included in the RFP
- *Section 106 Historic Resource Considerations Guidelines:* Because of its proximity to historic resources, Parcel 24 is subject to Section 106 Design Guidelines required by the Central Artery Project under federal law. The Section 106 Guidelines recommend street wall continuity; active and pedestrian-oriented ground floor uses; large ground floor windows along Kneeland Street; materials, scale and patterns reflecting adjacent historic buildings; building heights taller towards Kneeland Street (300' max. and 100' min.) and lower on Hudson Street (75' max. and 50' min.); and upper-floor setbacks both on Kneeland and Hudson Streets. The guidelines encourage a contemporary architectural expression rather than strict imitation of nearby historic resources.

- Crossroads Initiative: Planning and design for Kneeland Street is currently underway as part of the Crossroads Initiative process that follows the Rose Kennedy Greenway.
- *Hudson Street for Chinatown*: A group of Chinatown community members and residents held a series of meetings, including a design forum, to create their vision for development of Parcel 24. On May 10, 2004, the Hudson Street for Chinatown group issued their vision for Parcel 24, which can be viewed at [www.parcel24.blogspot.com](http://www.parcel24.blogspot.com).

In responding to these policies and regulations, developers should be guided by the following:

### **Parcel 24 Goals and Objectives**

- The development goal for Parcel 24 is to create housing for the Chinatown community and the residents of the City of Boston. This could be achieved by providing a variety of housing types, such as units for families and the elderly.
- The development should achieve a high level and depth of affordability for the Chinatown community and City of Boston.
- The development should restore the residential character of the east side of Hudson Street. It should extend residential development as far south as Tai Tung Street, providing a compatible residential face to the existing town houses and covering the ramp wall supporting the Albany Street extension.
- In addition, the development should create:
  - Ground floor retail/commercial space;
  - Community Space; and
  - Open Space/ Public Realm elements.

### **Use Guidelines**

- Housing
  1. The project should include approximately 275-325 units of housing.
  2. **The project should maximize the number of affordable housing units.** In order to achieve maximum affordability, it is expected that the developer will pursue all available and appropriate housing subsidy sources (city, state, and federal). Conventional market-rate housing will provide internal subsidies to support affordable housing.
  3. The affordable housing component should include both rental and condominium ownership opportunities.
  4. The affordable units should include a mix of studio, one-, two-, and three-bedroom or larger units, reflecting the broad range of housing needs within the community. There is a particular need for three-bedroom and larger units to accommodate growing families, which face difficulty in finding appropriately-sized and affordable housing in Chinatown.
  5. Goals for the mix of affordable housing units:
    - a) The affordable rental component should include approximately 60-80 low-income units, of which approximately one-third are affordable to households with incomes up to 30% of the Boston Area Median Income (AMI). The remaining approximately two-thirds affordable units should be for households at or below 60% AMI.

- b) The project should provide the maximum number of affordable ownership units, which should serve a range of incomes: at least one-half of the units should be affordable to households with incomes of up to 80% of the Boston AMI, and no more than one-half should be affordable to households with incomes between 80% and 120% of the Boston AMI, with fewer units at the higher end of this range.
  - 6. a) Preference for up to 50% of the housing units will be made available to households displaced during the 1960's from Parcel 24 as a result of the government taking of said parcel for the construction of the Massachusetts State Highway Project.
  - b) A preference for Boston residents will be made available for all affordable housing units in the Project.
- The Hudson Street for Chinatown has set forth the following goals for affordable housing in their vision document (See [www.parcel24.blogspot.com](http://www.parcel24.blogspot.com)). The numbers and percentages of units and their affordability expressed in the vision document are affirmative statements of desired outcomes having taken into consideration other factors such as height, density, and financial feasibility. They are not minimums.
  - a) To maximize the use of Low Income Tax Credits, there should be at least 75 rental units, all of which are affordable to families earning at or less than 50% of the area median income. Of the rental units, 1/3 of them should be affordable to families earning 30% of the area median income and 2/3 of them should be affordable to families earning 50% of the area median income.
  - b) Among the remaining units, which would be condominiums, at least half should be affordable, on average, to families earning up to 75% of the area median income. Of these affordable condominium units, most should be affordable to families earning up to 50% of the area median income, fewer should be affordable to families earning between 50% to 75% of the area median income, and the least should be affordable to families earning between 75% to 120% of the area median income. The rest should be sold at market-rate.
- Public Realm
  1. The development should include a Hudson Street streetscape in the character of Chinatown with element that meet or exceed City of Boston standards – granite curbs, concrete sidewalks, street lights, and street trees with grates.
  2. The development should build and maintain a community park in the middle portion of the parcel.
  3. This park should incorporate a public pedestrian connection between Hudson Street and the South Station Connector sidewalks.
  4. The park design and program should undergo further community discussion.
  5. The potential use of rooftops for open green space should be considered.
- Community Space
 

The project should include between 5,000-10,000sf of space at rents accessible to community-based non-profit organizations. The selected developer should anticipate taking part in community discussion regarding the community space.
- Commercial/ Retail Space
  1. The development should include retail uses within the Kneeland Street ground floor. The selected developer should anticipate participating in further community discussion regarding commercial space.

2. Any local commercial/ retail along Hudson Street should be accessible at rents for neighborhood-owned small businesses. The selected developer should anticipate participating in further community discussion regarding commercial space.

## Design Guidelines

### *Height, Massing, and Park Design*

Building height and massing should reinforce the scale of the surrounding streets by placing more height at the Kneeland Street end of the parcel and less height closer toward Tai Tung Street.

- Kneeland Street
  1. The building height at Kneeland Street should be in the range of 155' to 185' (15- 18 floors), approximately the height of the existing 75 Kneeland Street.
  2. Its North-South dimension should be similar to 75 Kneeland, approximately 130'.
  3. To maintain the urban design character of Kneeland Street, the building mass should have no setbacks from the Kneeland Street lot line except at the mechanical equipment penthouse.
- Hudson Street Mid-block
  1. Between the Kneeland Street section of the site and Harvard Street the structure should be in the height range of 85' to 105' (eight-10 floors).
  2. The structure may be connected to the Kneeland Street building element.
  3. The structure may set back from the Hudson Street sidewalk to provide an area for landscape treatment.
  4. The building must set back from Albany Street to accommodate an eight-foot (min.) sidewalk to be constructed by the developer, and may be set back further to implement the streetscape guidelines to be established by the South Bay study. The developer should consider the current work by the South Bay Planning Study Task Force.
  5. The building mass should be vertically articulated to further reinforce the character of the neighborhood. Long unbroken horizontal walls should be avoided.
- The Community Park
  1. The park must extend the width of the site in the East-West dimension and must extend in the North-South direction from the northern street line of Harvard Street (extended eastward) to the southern street line of the South Station Connector (extended westward).
  2. The park must include some area at the Hudson Street grade. The park could be terraced, including one at the Albany Street grade.
  3. The park shall be open to the sky.
  4. The park must accommodate pedestrian movement and views from Harvard Street and Hudson Street to Albany Street and the South Station Connector.
  5. The park and the adjacent Parcel 24 buildings shall provide an accessible connection between the lower elevation of Hudson Street and the higher elevation of Albany Street that is open and easily available to the general public; the connection may be a ramp, elevator, or escalator.
  6. In the design it is important to reduce shadow and wind impacts making the open space as comfortable as possible.

7. The park may include very small structures to provide food service and park equipment storage.

- Tai Tung Street

Because the site narrows south of Harvard Street and the parcel is bounded by a highway ramp that diverges from Albany Street, the design of housing in the Tai Tung Street section of the site is particularly challenging. The ramp's configuration, approximately 20' higher than Hudson Street, creates a condition that makes some of the eastern portion of the site unsuitable for habitation. Given this condition, a five-story building would allow for three full floors of housing. The ground floor might be used for parking and the second floor for storage.

1. The development between the southern end of the Community Park and Tai Tung Street must be built to a design that is sympathetic to and compatible with the town houses across the street. The buildings may be in the range of 55' to 65' (five to six floors). The buildings should avoid a uniform cornice line but should instead have variation in height and treatment, similar to those across the street.
2. Where the site has sufficient width, a back-yard garden at the level of the second floor may be provided as a buffer from Albany Street noise.
3. A zone of landscape at the elevation of Albany Street should border the buildings along the east side to protect the residents from the traffic impacts of Albany Street where the site is too narrow for gardens.
4. The developer should consider the current work by the South Bay Planning Study Task Force.

### *Architectural Character*

- Building Type

1. The project shall offer a variety of housing types including town- houses, corridor flats, and point-block units that minimize corridor space.
2. Ground floor retail, restaurant, and community-use space shall have greater height than the residential floors and shall have facades made mostly of clear glass to enhance the sense of activity and safety on the street.
3. All parking spaces shall be concealed from view either below grade or behind active uses.
4. Access to service bays and parking spaces shall be located away from the main entrances to the housing and retail uses and shall be designed to have minimum visual impact on the streetscape.

- Facades, Materials, and Details

1. The design shall emphasize human scale in all aspects of the architecture from the largest to the smallest building elements.
2. The architecture shall enhance and strengthen the character of the neighborhood, not by copying the design of the neighborhood buildings, but by understanding the most important aspects of the neighborhood and interpreting those aspects respectfully in a manner that is true to our times rather than an imitation of the past.

- Sustainability/ Green Building

The project proponent shall create a building that addresses sustainable and green building practices. Those practices recognize the interdependence of the natural and built

environments and endeavor to conserve energy, limit the use of non-renewable resources, provide for healthy living and work environments and reduce operation and maintenance costs through various techniques and practices. Common sustainable objectives and practices include:

- Using technologies for activities such as heating, cooling and manufacturing that minimize the use of non-renewable sources of energy such as oil and gas.
- Capturing stormwater so that it can be used for such activities like the irrigation of community gardens and parks/open space or to replenish groundwater
- Improving indoor air quality by using materials such as paints and carpeting that contain fewer toxic ingredients than the current standard. This can be important for individuals with chemical sensitivities or respiratory problems.
- Using recycled products.
- Recycling and/or providing for the reprocessing and reuse of materials obtained through demolition or remaining post-construction. These practices can provide materials for those who might not otherwise have access to them and have land and air quality benefits by keeping these materials out of landfills and incinerators.

## **Parking/ Vehicular Service**

### *Provision of Parking*

1. The selected developer should include parking sufficient to meet its own demands on-site, following both existing zoning and Boston Transportation Department guidelines.
2. BTD guidelines for Chinatown call for a ratio of 0.5 – 1.0 spaces per residential unit and 0.4 spaces per 1,000 sf of office or commercial space.
3. The developer should also investigate creative solutions to address parking issues for community residents. At a minimum, consideration should be given to making additional parking spaces within the development available for sale or lease to neighborhood residents.

### *Design Guidelines*

1. Parking should not be visible from Kneeland, Albany or Hudson Streets.
2. Below-grade parking from the Hudson Street side is preferred.
3. Access to and egress from parking should not be located on Kneeland Street.